

## COMMISSION ON VETERAN AFFAIRS MEETING MINUTES



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**SPECIAL CALLED MEETING**  
**August 16, 2017**

The Commission on Veteran Affairs convened in a regular meeting on August 16, 2017 at City Hall located on 301 W 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Austin Texas 78701.

Chair Jason Denny called the Board Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Board Members in Attendance:

Jason Denny - Chair	Ramiro Hinojosa
Pete Salzar- Vice Chair	Manuel Jimenez
Chris Ehlinger	Adrenne Mendoza
Josephine Hinds	Molly Potter

Staff in Attendance: Sylba Everett, Allen Bergeron, Tina Lee

#### 1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Chair Jason Denny asked the Commission members to review the minutes from the special called meeting on May 24, 2017. Commissioner Potter made a motion to approve the May meeting minutes. Motion passed with no objection.

#### 2. BUSINESS

- In discussion regarding the working groups, the concentration has been on women veterans, homeless veterans and transitioning veterans. The commission requested to add “senior veterans” to the list of priorities to be discussed and the request to ensure there is no redundancy in the workgroups and to have them assigned as they come through.
- The Veteran Business Enterprise (VBE) was discussed at the MBE / WBE Small Business Enterprise Procurement Program Advisory Committee and the committee voted in favor to support the Veterans Commission on the current issues of the VBE and which department will be implementing the VBE within their programs at the City of Austin.
- The Veterans commission put forth a resolution regarding the Veteran’s one stop shop being created in the City of Austin and it was passed at the Austin City Council in June. The next step would be to create a business plan which is to be determined and have the Assistant City Manager and Human Resources Director to collaborate with the Veterans Commission with this new initiative.

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- The Veterans Plaza discussion and where they will be adding the monument will be discussed at the next commission meeting by the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department.
- The Veterans Commission voted in support of resuming the Women Roll Call events that were initiated from the Texas Veterans Commission's Women's Program and was not continued due to funding. On September 30<sup>th</sup> from 11AM – 3PM at the University Baptist Church, Dell talent acquisition will be there and Chief Kerr from AFD is scheduled as one of the keynote speakers to promote women in service and lead in communities. The attendance is currently at cap and they have received \$1500 in sponsorships and will like to continue to make this a reoccurring event for our local women veterans.
- Jolene Grajczyk from the Veterans Courts presented to the commission on the status of current veteran projects and funding. Currently, they are funded till next fiscal year of 2019 and looking for alternative funding sources. The courts continue to run smoothly with 177 graduates and 30 pending. Their success rate is at 85% and the biggest challenge would be to create and continue awareness and education to police officers. The ability to add "Veteran" on Texas driver's license has been a positive attribute and the funding they are looking for will pay for staff and case workers. They have been awarded the TVC grant annually for the Veterans to have a SCRAM for those participating in the program.
- Veronica Briseno, James Scarboro and Rolando Fernandez provided a status update regarding the VBE and where it will be placed within the City of Austin. Mr. Scarboro with the Purchasing office communicated with the Mayor and Council and that his department will be taking over the VBE. They are working with other partners and the request for proposals (RFP) had a 3% program oversight in the memo and offers will be include subcontractors. Implementation will be determined to contract level only. The start date would be in Fiscal year October 2017 and the process will have 3% preference on RFP and they will allow time without delay associated with the contracting program. Experience of repetition and recommendations to the Veterans Commission and Council will come up and they will have the rate based on some kind of analysis to experience the process. The 3% starting point (RFP) will be based on comparison to federal programs and other cities. The interim period is to not exceed 21 months and will begin with a smart and conservative number to start soon. Capital Contracting discussed that with construction procurement; the bid is based on qualifications rather than lowest bid. They will gather charts across the state and send out to the commission on how the rating was determined. They have decided to have the service disability at 20% based on the State. Jim Brennan informed everyone that the VBE has been a work in progress for 11 years and that 3% is referred to the RFP experience and business needs to the City.
- Stephen Sonnenberg, Rowena Dasch and Bill Bednar presented their insights and recommendations regarding the Veterans Plaza to the Commission to have it placed at the Watson House near the University of Texas. Stephen informed the Commission that Waller creek needs to be cleaned up to rehabilitate the site but together they will be able to bring people together to promote healing. The Watson house is the 9<sup>th</sup> oldest building in Austin and is hidden away from the growth. It is situated in a location where the building could be restored and become a resource center. Bill Bednar, USMC Vietnam

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Veteran informed the commission that it is a great area for service members to go and connect with others. The Veterans Community Pavilion will be added to a future agenda list.

- Scott Morrison with Project Winter Comfort presented his community project of procuring and passing out 500 hygiene kits to homeless veterans and requests the support of the Veteran's commission and City of Austin to get corporate sponsors to continue this great initiative.
- Glenn Towery presented to the Commission regarding art therapy for PTSD and suicide prevention. It is stated that 22 Veterans are committing suicide each day and this festival is projected to happen in 2019 in collaboration with the community, City, Art commissions and Austin City Museums to make this a wide known project and for support to promote it and make it happen.
- In regards to the working groups, the priorities, objectives will continue and for the commission to actively meet and discuss ways to improve the Veteran's lives locally.
- The USO is scheduled to be a part of the new portion of the Austin Bergstrom International Airport and they are currently fine tuning the contract.

### 3. PUBLIC HEARINGS

N/A (No public hearings during this meeting)

### 4. STAFF UPDATES

- Five departments within the City of Austin are participating in the Fort Hood internship and the City of Austin Veterans program is communicating with Combined Arms regarding the One Stop Shop initiative. A new commissioner was appointed by CM Renteria, Manuel Jimenez retired as a MSGT in the USAF and has worked with Constable Conchola regarding veteran issues and looks forward to serving the City of Austin.

### 5. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION: GENERAL

- Jim Darwin, chair of the Veterans Day Parade Committee spoke to the commission regarding the upcoming parade scheduled for November 11, 2017. Those interested in walking in the parade are encouraged to meet at Congress Ave. The honoring theme for the parade is "The Poppy" recognizing WWI and help and volunteers are needed. The website <http://austinveteransparade.org> is available for those who need more information.

**ADJOURN:** Jason Denny adjourned the meeting at 9:10PM. Without objection